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**Socialist Studies No 75, Spring 2010**

## **The General Election 2010: Revolutionary Use Of The Vote**

The working class makes up a clear majority under capitalism. A member of the working class is someone who either has to sell their ability to work for a wage and a salary or is dependent on someone who does have to work for a living. And this class has one powerful political weapon: the vote.

However, workers are presently deeply unclear and confused about their political interests, the class society in which they find themselves and their subservient place within it. Instead of understanding capitalism and becoming socialists they waste their vote by electing political leaders from the capitalist parties, Labour, Tory and so on, erroneously believing that they have a shared interest with the capitalist class as it competes with foreign capitalists on the world market.

Workers do not have a shared interest with the capitalist class. Instead, they have a diametrically opposite class interest of their own. And this distinct interest arises out of workers not owning the means of production. The means to life is privately owned by the capitalist class with a view to profit not to meet human need. As a class of non-owners workers are forced into employment and have to struggle for higher wages and better working conditions.

And in the productive process workers create all the social wealth. As a consequence capitalists are forever trying to increase the intensity and extent of exploitation. They can never leave the workers alone. Capitalists make their profits by exploiting the working class. Workers produce more wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. And the capitalists live off this surplus as the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.

## **Cynicism and Satire Change Nothing**

Workers are constantly being let down by politicians. This is hardly surprising. Politicians have to defend or pursue the interests of the capitalist class and not the interest of workers. As a result a sizable minority of workers no longer bother to vote. Others use their vote as an act of revenge against the failed policies and promises of the present government. Others believe there is no alternative to the main parties but vote anyway under misplaced duty and abject resignation that nothing can be changed.

For many workers, voting at elections is often their only involvement in politics. After the election it is back to moaning or laughing at the antics of the government and the opposition through watching or reading programmes

such as HAVE I GOT NEWS FOR YOU, and PRIVATE EYE. Satire, though, changes nothing.

Some workers take part in protest politics. They take part in marches and demonstrations, join organisations like Greenpeace and Oxfam and sign petitions to be ceremoniously handed into Downing Street all in the belief that pressure groups, demonstrations and petitions will change politics for the good of everyone. They do not. A million people, for example, marched against the War in Iraq but the war took place anyway.

The error is to believe that politicians and governments are representatives of all society. Political commentators like D J Taylor are worried about the cynicism that exists between the voters and MPs. He wants “*some way of strengthening the mechanism that connects, or is supposed to connect, the average elector with the person who does (or doesn't) represent them*” (INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY 27.12.09). However, no such mechanism exists because there can be no real connection between the working class and politicians. This should come as no surprise. Over 150 years ago Marx and Engels pointed out in THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO that the State was merely “*the Executive of the Bourgeoisie*”. This fact has not changed despite the growth of State education, health and social security.

Yet since the franchise was extended to the working class in the 19th century politicians have had to pander to the electorate promising everything just to get their vote. However, when in power decisions are constantly taken by government Ministers against the interest of the majority who voted them into power. This political contradiction is at the heart of capitalist politics.

As governments and politicians have increasingly failed to deliver their promises to the working class so they have become more evasive, dissembling and expert at keeping what they really believe below the water line; a disreputable iceberg politics of deceit. Information is controlled, spun, buried or craftily packaged by politicians to mean something else. Contempt for politicians has never been higher yet a majority of the working class are still prepared to waste their vote against their own class interest by voting for the Labour Party.

Some workers, for example, vote for the Labour Party because they hate the Tories for the wealth and privilege they represent. “*Anything is better than the Tories*” they say. It is the politics of idiots. According to an opinion poll (INDEPENDENT 23.12.09) a majority still perceive the Tories as a party of the “*toffs*”. It is wrong. Just look at the rich and powerful in the Labour Party.

All the political parties; Labour, Greens, Liberal Democrats, and the Tories **are** the Parties of the rich. When in power or in opposition they seek to express the political interests of those who privately own the means of production to the exclusion of the rest of society, usually around questions of taxation, interest rates, subsidies, the budget; issues of no interest to the working class. Is a Labour government going to war and using troops to break strikes “*better*” than the Tories following the same policies?

## Failure of the Political Parties of Capitalism

What of the failure of the main political parties? Workers with long memories will recall why the Labour Party was elected in 1997. Then it was a result of the failed policies of the Tory government. Their “*popular capitalism*” had become very unpopular. Over 3 million workers had been made unemployed in the depression under John Major. It was not a society at ease with itself. Sid had lost his job and was forced to sell his shares. Workers who used their redundancy money to set up as the self-employed went bankrupt and lost their homes. There was no “*property owning democracy*”. The capitalist class still owned the means of production and the Tories had been corrupted by years of power, sleaze and scandal.

In short, the Tory Party had failed to meet the interest of the working class just as the Labour government today has failed to deliver its promises. They came into power with the pop anthem “*Things can only get better*” It didn't. Take Labour's empty boast of ending boom and bust. It was a myth. 2.5 million workers have been made unemployed and the figure is still rising, other workers have been forced to take pay cuts, forced into part-time working or forced to take long periods of “*leave*”. Capitalist governments cannot prevent the economic destruction and the subsequent social pain of the trade cycle. Unemployment exists while capitalism exists.

Then there is war. Workers are now well aware that the Labour Party will prosecute wars to defend or further the interest of the capitalist class just as ruthlessly as the Tories did when they were in power. The Labour Party has a history of supporting capitalism's wars; wars which are never for "*democracy and freedom*" but, instead, for the protection of trade routes, securing raw resources like oil and protecting spheres of strategic influence. It is the working class who do the killing and the dying not the politicians and the capitalists they serve.

And then there are Labour's failed reform policies. Labour said they were going to abolish child poverty but it did not happen. The elderly remain vulnerable; many cold, living in poor housing and cut off from the wider society often living in lonely, degrading and debilitating circumstances.

Labour could never solve the problem of poverty because it is a problem that flows from the private ownership of the means of production. And the Labour Party, despite its rhetoric about "*social justice*" has to support the private ownership of the means of production - the cause of poverty. Labour is faced with the insurmountable contradiction of wanting to solve the problems of capitalism while retaining, supporting and pursuing the capitalist cause of these social problems.

What of the Liberal Democrats and Greens? They are also political parties who represent the interests of the capitalist class. They are the recipients of the protest vote and a lack of political imagination of those voting for them. They exist to continue the system of profit and private ownership of the means of production. Their pet policies will go the way of all idealistic reforms once they get elected and if they ever share power in a hung parliament. They can never solve the problems of unemployment, poverty and war facing the working class. The protest vote is a lost vote; a lost opportunity of making a real political difference by changing society in a revolutionary way from one producing for profit to one producing to meet human need.

There is also the utter irrelevance of the capitalist left and British Nationalist Party. The Left have still not recovered from the collapse of state capitalism in the Soviet Union, the failure of Labour's old nationalisation and Keynesian policies and the complete disintegration in 1989 of the anti-working class ideas associated with Lenin and Trotsky. They are trapped in a time warp playing out a childish "*Dave Spart*" politics from which few continue to pursue after their university days. The capitalist Left have nothing important to say except to carp on at the antics of the Labour Party leadership but later on in their political careers many former Trots are found advising Labour cabinets or actually becoming Ministers of State to use troops to break strikes, engage in war and behaving more Tory than the Tories. It is no use to complain that the Labour Party leadership administer capitalism against the interests of the working class. That is their job.

And then there is the bogeyman: the British Nationalist Party. The creation of the failed policies of the Labour and Tory parties many of which the BNP have embraced to mask their racism. Nick Griffin is no Adolph Hitler; more of a Roderick Spode, who, from the pen of P. G. Wodehouse drilled his Black Shorts and pursued a barmy policy of nationalistic root vegetables and knee measurements. But Nick Griffin is needed by the Left to justify their failed politics. When they violently clash on the streets it is difficult to tell them apart. And a SWP leadership in power is just a frightening prospect as the BNP in power. One politics leads to gulags the other to concentration camps.

## The Socialist Alternative

What of the real political alternative to the parties of capitalism? What of the Socialist alternative? The Socialist Party of Great Britain established in 1904 and reconstituted in June 1991 has a revolutionary view of politics completely different from the Tories, Liberal Democrats and Labour Party. We state that capitalism can only be run in the interest of the capitalist class. It is their system and the working class should let the capitalist politicians get on to administer it the best they can.

The problems which the working class face require capitalism being replaced with Socialism. Workers have to take conscious and political action without leaders to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. World capitalism has to be replaced with World Socialism. That is the Socialist message to the working class at this election. Social reforms cannot prevent war, unemployment and

end poverty. Social reformers have been passing social reform legislation for over two hundred years and the problems facing the working class still remain.

Socialists mean what we say. Until capitalism is abolished by the world's working class social problems like unemployment will persist. There is no hidden agenda. We do not hide our political programme and Socialist objective. We say that a class majority of workers must organise consciously and politically to replace the profit system with one based on production for use. And this political act must be through the ballot, using the vote for Socialist ends.

The working class, in order to establish Socialism, must conquer the powers of government. Socialist delegates have to be sent to Parliament so that the machinery of government "*...may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation...*" (Clause 6 of the SPGB's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES). With the Socialist Party of Great Britain what you see is what you get; a political party organised to pursue the class struggle with a singular Socialist object; Socialism and only Socialism.

Socialists view the revolutionary use of the vote as being of the utmost importance to the working class. The vote is like a sharp razor blade; it can either be used to cut through the dense political forest of capitalist politics, privilege and power and establish Socialism or, as it has been used by workers in the past; to cut their own throats. Socialists are currently very few on the ground. But we have a sound and valid Socialist case against capitalism. From the failure of capitalism to meet the needs of the majority of society come questioning, dissent, political understanding and Socialists. This is the future; one where enlightened workers begin to read our literature, discuss with us socialist ideas and by becoming Socialists in order to create a Socialist revolution and a classless society.

## SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TO THE WORKING CLASS

Let every man and woman of the working class, therefore, who is interested in the welfare of that class, who is weary and sick of heart with the miserable tragedy of the worker's position, take up the Socialist Party's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES and examine them. Let him take them up as a challenge to his intellect and either convince himself of their truth or prove their falsity. Let him then bring his actions into line with his convictions, rejecting the socialist principles if he thinks them unsound, but adopting them and cleaving to them if he finds them true and unassailable.  
THE SOCIALIST PARTY: ITS PRINCIPLE AND POLICY p. 35 August 1934

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## The Strike Weapon

The Post office Workers strike, which began in October 2009, was a dispute of over the Post Office's "*modernisation programme*" and how employers were going to handle redundancies which, they say, are "*inevitable*". In taking strike action the Post office workers, like the working class generally, do not own the means of production nor do they enjoy the support of the government and the machinery of State. They always begin at a disadvantage with their employers.

Strikes also place workers in hardship. They are not taken lightly. However, as the Socialist Party of Great Britain suggested, the best strikes do not occur. Workers can use the strike weapon in times of boom and gain higher wages and better working conditions when employers do not want production stopped for fear of disrupting the flow of profits. Just the threat of a strike is enough to concede pay demand. Long strikes are almost always a recipe for disaster.

The Print unions and journalists learnt the hard lesson of striking to prevent the introduction of labour saving machinery in the late 1970's against Rupert Murdoch's News International and the miners were crushed by an intransigent employer and hostile government determined to break the 1985 strike against redundancies in the coal industry.

This leads to the question of the effectiveness of the strike weapon in the class struggle.

The original idea of the strike was for the workers in a single factory to stop production and thereby bring pressure to bear on the employer to make concessions on wages and working conditions or see his profits turned into losses. Later, as unions became organized nationally, the aim was to hold up an industry or several industries simultaneously.

A further development was to organise a strike covering several essential industries as a means to force the government to alter its policies or even to force it to resign; the so-called General strike. Britain had its “*general strike*” in 1926. Others had already taken place in various European countries, and over the decades there have been dozens in Italy, France, Japan and elsewhere.

Looking first at the straightforward wages-and-conditions strike, how much do they achieve and what are the conditions governing their success or failure? Karl Marx, writing about the conditions of more than a century and a half ago, held that the over-riding factor is not whether trade unions do or do not organise numerous strikes but whether trade is booming or in a depression.

If the former, the employers have urgent reasons not to see production halted; if the latter, they may prefer to have a showdown as with the current BA dispute.

Unite's National Officer recently denounced the airline's attempt to impose contractual changes, which the union says would extend working hours, cut crew levels and bring in new workers on "*bargain basement wages*". He said: "*It is a disgraceful attempt to intimidate workers into accepting poorer contracts. This imposition must be withdrawn. BA must step back from the brink and get back round the table to talk*".

The airline argues it has to cut labour costs to cope with losses. It posted record losses of £401m last year, and £148m for the first quarter this year. Its chief executive, Willie Walsh, has said the airline – hit by the slump in business class travel – is in a "*fight for survival*" (GUARDIAN 8th October 2009). Although Unite were successful in getting the strike to take place by a majority of the membership BA were equally successful in using the law to render the strike illegal. Even if another ballot is called and workers at BA vote to go on strike they will do so under unfavourable economic conditions against a ruthless and determined employer. BA intends to use agency pilots to break the strike (DAILY MAIL 19.02.2010).

Marx's view on strike action and the state of the economy was echoed by Hugh Scanlon of the engineering union in an interview given to the SUNDAY TIMES over 35 years ago. Scanlon said:

*“The union movement is only strong so long as there is relatively full employment...so long as there is not a crisis of capitalism. I've never fooled myself that once the economic boot goes on the other foot, those who preach about getting round the table to settle our disputes would be as ruthless once again as they were in the ‘thirties’”*  
(SUNDAY TIMES 12th May 1974).

And in the current depression the employers have been ruthless; many workers have been forced to go on part-time work; endure pay cuts, enforced "*holidays*" and "*sabbaticals*" as well as face redundancies. They even received praise for their "*sacrifice*" from the friend of the filthy rich Lord Mandelson (MAIL ON SUNDAY 31.01.10). No such sacrifice from the capitalist class.

And Governments always play a role in strikes whether purely industrial or partly or wholly political: the role of curbing pickets and protecting the property of employers. And invariably when unions take on the Government backed by the coercive powers of State it is the latter that invariably wins. The capitalist State has coercive force at its disposal which includes the police, the armed forces, the judiciary and the prisons. The State also can call on financial resources trade unions cannot match. And it has the secret service and access to the media for its propaganda.

A single-minded determination by the then Tory government was shown in the miner's strike of 1984 which lasted for a year. The Thatcher government, with secure stockpiles of coal used the full power of the State including the secret services to ensure that the miner's did not win in their strike over pit closures. After a year the miners were

forced back to work and the National Union of Miners were broken with demoralised members, loss of union resources and the creation of a rival break-away Union. In October 1992 the Tory Government announced plans to close a third of Britain's deep coal mines with the loss of 31,000 jobs. What was then left of the mining industry was privatized.

But just as employers, in line with the state of trade, sometimes do not choose to fight to the finish, so on occasion they will make it clear that they do not want the government to take these extreme measures. This happened under the Heath government. Having won the 1970 election a policy of "*standing up to the unions*" (Heath said he was prepared to face a general strike if necessary), and having pushed through the Industrial Relations Act, his government found that influential employers, at this time, did not want a showdown with the unions -though their attitude changed once the depression developed later on.

This produced the strange situation of an anonymous donor paying £65,000 into court to avoid a threatened engineering strike over the fine that had been imposed on the union (THE TIMES, 9th May 1974), and the offer of £2.5 million by a secret group of businessmen to persuade the miners' union to end their strike (THE TIMES, 12th February 1974). And most big employers took no notice of the clauses in the act making the closed shop illegal.

What of political strikes and general strikes? Under the Heath government numerous one-day strikes were organized having as their object such things as to prevent the enactment of the Industrial Relations Act (all without the slightest effect). The Trade unions campaigned against the legislation with a nationwide "*Kill the Bill*" campaign with a "*day of action*" in protest on the 12th January with a march through London supported by the capitalist left. Other trade union action took place to prevent rising prices, or to protest at "*wage restraint*"; while in other countries there were general strikes to force a change of government policy or a change of government.

What happened in this country shows the futility of all these industrial actions. The government was indeed changed at the 1974 general election and the Industrial Relations Act was repealed, but it merely replaced a Tory government running capitalism by a Labour government doing the same, a government forced to grapple with the same problems in much the same way. Prices and unemployment rocketed to post-war record levels, and a new "*wage-restraint*" scheme was introduced in flat disregard of election pledges. This in turn saw the re-election of the Tories under Margaret Thatcher who introduced a raft of anti-trade union legislation (continued by Blair's Labour government in 1997) and who then went on to take on and defeat The National Union of Mineworkers under the leadership of Arthur Scargill.

A general strike can produce conditions of chaos. But chaos is not Socialism, and so long as the great majority of workers do not want Socialism, Socialism cannot be the outcome. Strikes, as defensive weapons, serve as a useful purpose within the limits imposed by capitalism, but the only road to Socialism is the political road; first that the working class become predominately Socialist, and then that they gain control of the machinery of government, including the armed forces.

## THE SECRET MILLIONAIRE

THE SECRET MILLIONAIRE is a so-called reality television show run by CHANNEL 4, in which millionaires go disguised into impoverished communities and agree to give away tens of thousand of pounds to the "*deserving poor*".

Two of the secrets the programme never identifies are, first, how the millionaire in question amassed his fortune to begin with and, second, why recipients for his charitable *largesse* exist at all.

The millionaire's wealth actually comes from the class he goes out to visit; the working class. Workers produce more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. Marx called this "*surplus value*" and is the source of the unearned income passing to the capitalist class in the form of rent, interest and profit. And the "*impoverished poor*" of the inner cities are poor, not because of their own personal failing, but because, as a class, workers do not own the means of production. That is the source of their poverty.

The producers of CHANNEL 4 can never let on that the class privilege of their pet millionaire derives from class

exploitation and the private ownership of the means of production. In fact, THE SECRET MILLIONAIRE is not reality TV but instead fantasy TV. The programme is designed to put a class of parasites in a good light. The recipients of the millionaire's charity are how the TV producers would like to think of our class, as George Orwell did in 1984; passive, stupid and feckless.

But a conscious understanding by a majority of workers of their class position would lead to a rapid abolition of both the social conditions which keep them in poverty and the establishment of a Socialist system based on meeting human need for everyone rather than profit for the few. That reality is to be welcomed.

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## **Wage Cuts, Wage Freezes & Enforced Holidays**

When capitalism is going through a period of expansion most industries are able to sell all their commodities at a profit. With unemployment low it is a favourable time for unions to press for higher wage claims. Employers, rather than have the flow of profits interrupted, will make concessions, often without strikes actually taking place. In this phase of the trade cycle the workers' standard of living rises.

In a serious depression like now the position is reversed. The threat by the unions to close the factories loses most of its force because, with sales falling and with profits harder to make and often disappearing altogether, employers are cutting production, standing workers off, closing factories down, and in extreme cases going out of business. The big increase of unemployment, it is now 2.49 million workers unemployed, helps the employers to resist claims for wage increase. In this phase of the trade cycle it is normal for the standard of living of workers to fall, quite apart from what happens to the unemployed.

As far as workers in work are concerned, what is going on in a depression is obscured because, at least for a time, wages and salaries continue to rise more than the rise of prices. In 2008 average earnings were 4.6 % and the government Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 4.6% (OFFICE NATIONAL STATISTICS September 2009). But employers are interested not only in rates of wages but equally in the amount of work they can get out of each worker. There has been a general intensification of the rate of exploitation so that the same output can be obtained with fewer workers. One of the central features of the current dispute in the postal services is over the introduction of labour saving machinery where more work is carried out by fewer workers.

The increasing use of computer systems in central and local government has also seen a fall in the number of workers employed in areas such as housing and finance. And with the deepening of the depression the wage trend is now changing. In the period January to September 2009 the CPI had fallen to 1.15 per cent and average earnings had only risen by 1.2 per cent.

Of course the unions try to resist this and declare that it is unacceptable just as they have done during all previous depressions. They try to do their best but they cannot escape the consequences of capitalism, any more than capitalists can escape the consequence of competition and the trade cycle.

Different groups of workers come up against the impact of the trade depression in different ways ranging from private industry, where falling profits has immediate and direct consequences for them, to the public sector, in which subsidies may lessen the impact for the time, to the Civil Service and local government, where cuts and government pay policy is the decisive factor.

In manufacturing industry, with many bankruptcies and companies on the verge of closing down, some workers have been forced to work part-time, take pay cuts or go on enforced holidays or sabbaticals. 750 workers at the Birmingham based van manufacturer LDV were all put on half pay (GUARDIAN 18. 04.09) and in May 2009 workers at Honda agreed to take a pay cut of 3 per cent (GUARDIAN 23 10 09). In the service sector the situation is the same as manufacturing. In Manchester some solicitors earning £50,000 a year now have to work for £20,000 and a similar situation exists in London

. According to the magazine RETAIL WEEK 1 in 4 workers in retail have had to take pay cuts (01. 06. 09). Research published by the pay monitoring body, Incomes Data Services (IDS), has shown that one impact of the depression on pay decisions in 2009 has been the growing incidence of pay freezes (0% pay settlements). In May 2009, the IDS Report highlighted a significant increase in the proportion of company pay reviews that have resulted in pay freezes. IDS reported that, of 243 pay deals monitored so far in 2009, some 64 – or just over a quarter – were pay freezes, compared with only seven pay freezes reported in the whole of 2008.

In the class struggle between capital and labour the crisis and depression is a good time for employers to prevent workers getting more pay and to start attacking current pay and working conditions. More than half of UK employers revealed they were planning to freeze staff wages for the second year in a row

John Cridland, the Confederation of British Industry's deputy director-general said.

*"Market conditions continue to be tough and growth in 2010 will be feeble, so pay is going to be squeezed for some time to come. As unemployment has risen, businesses and staff across the country have had to adapt to new economic realities. Pay cuts to preserve jobs are part of that reality."* (CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY 17.11.09)

The CBI report also went on to show that some 43% of employers had reduced paid overtime and 26% had cut back on shifts. Staff bonuses have also been hit by the economic decline.

The incidence of pay freezes reportedly varied between economic sectors with engineering – particularly vehicles and components – and chemicals manufacturing accounting for two fifths of all pay freezes. A number of pay freezes have also been implemented in sectors such as financial services, media, and air and road transport (EIRO ON LINE November 2009).

Increasing numbers of so called professional workers, architects and solicitors are taking up “*sabbaticals*” offered by depression-hit firms seeking to cut costs but avoid redundancies. In return for a drop in salary of between 70 and 75 per cent, employees are taking three, six month to a year enforced holidays to ensure they can pick up their employment once better economic conditions return (DAILY TELEGRAPH 12.11.09).

The banks that were nationalized by the Labour Government are also making redundancies although this has more to do with the restructuring and merging of the banks under state control than as a result of the depression. In July 2008 Northern Rock made 800 compulsory redundancies. The Royal Bank of Scotland announced 9000 job losses in April 2009 and a further 300 job cuts in August 2009. Many areas of central government in the pipeline for privatization are also experiencing redundancies. The Land Registry recently cut 1500 jobs in the lead up to privatization (GUARDIAN 28 10. 2009).

In the Civil Service and Local government the Labour government imposed a 2 per cent pay increase in 2008. In his pre-Budget Report the chancellor is to cap public pay at 1% until 2011 (BBC NEWS 10.12.09). In this field, directly or indirectly, the government controls the amount of money it is prepared to spend on wages. By imposing a wage discipline of the various government departments Labour hopes to set a pattern for wage increases generally.

Since 1956 Civil Service pay has, by agreement, been related to movements of pay for comparable work in outside industry. But long before 1956 in a less formal way, governments sought to prevent the pay of its employees getting out of line. A situation similar to the present one arose in 1931. Then, too, in a depression, the government drastically cut expenditure on its departments. Civil Service pay, which from 1920 to 1931 had been reduced periodically in line with the fall of prices, was subjected to a further 10 per cent cut; unemployment pay was also cut.

Governments enter into agreements with Civil Service unions but, like employers generally, when it suits them, they will suspend, modify, or break agreements, including those permitting claims to be taken to arbitration. In 2004, when Gordon Brown was Chancellor, the Government announced cuts in the Spending review of 104,000 Civil servants. In July 2009 Civil Servants were told that there would be cuts in redundancy and retirement pay.

The government is already contemplating moving thousands of civil servants out of London and selling off the

properties in which they currently work. A report by the Centre for Cities national research group predicts that, nationally, there could be 200,000 job losses in local government and 90,000 in the civil service (03. 11. 2009). The government, no matter who is in power, will continue the cuts and make civil servants redundant to save money. There is little the civil service unions will be able to do to prevent this occurring.

The government pays a large part of the expenditure of local government and through legislation force on local authorities to cap the amount of the rate increase. With less money Local Authorities are already making cuts, making some workers redundant through “*restructuring*” and off-loading services to the private sector. It is expected that no matter which capitalist political party gets into power after the general election greater cuts in local government will be made. Some have claimed up to 350,000 local government, civil service, hospital and university jobs will go (CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT 16th June 2009). 2000 job cuts were announced by Birmingham City Council alone in February 2010 (BBC NEWS 10.02.2010) and 20,000 throughout the country (INDEPENDENT 19.02.2010).

The declared attitude of the trade unions, particularly in the public sector, is to resist these cuts. Refuse collectors in Leeds went on a lengthy strike to prevent cuts in wages and the privatisation of services which would see redundancies. However, the media have long since run a campaign to split the working class; between those working in the private sector and those working in the public sector, pointing out to the former how the workers in the public sector have not had to bear any pain or discomfort during the current depression. Cuts will occur.

Of course workers have been here before. Those who do not learn from the past will only go on and repeat the same mistakes again. And the mistakes are two-fold. Firstly, workers carrying on voting into power capitalist politicians and secondly, not recognising that capitalism can never be run in the interest of the working class and that the establishment of Socialism is the only way forward.

## None of this social pain is necessary

None of the economic pain for the working class is necessary. Workers should use their intelligence and imagination to establish a socialist system which meets their needs, where they do not face unemployment, wage cuts, pay freezes and enforced “*sabbaticals*”. Capitalism is an anarchic and unpredictable social system whose economic laws create crises, depressions and unemployment. Politicians cannot do anything to prevent capitalism from behaving like capitalism - nasty, unpleasant and exploitative. Politicians exist to serve the interest of the capitalist class. And that means supporting the employers against workers.

The only viable and practical alternative to capitalism is Socialism. Where there is common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society production will take place by free and voluntary labour directly to meet human need.

Of course Socialism will not just come into existence by itself. The establishment of Socialism requires conscious and political action by a socialist majority. Nothing short of this will do. A majority of workers must understand, agree with and actively pursue the establishment of Socialism through a principled Socialist Party with Socialism and only Socialism as its objective.

Marx put it this way:

“*Instead of the conservative motto: “A fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work they (the working class) ought to inscribe on their banners the revolutionary watchword “Abolition of the wages system”.*

And it is only with the abolition of the wages system that the problems facing the working class will be overcome.

## THE FUTURE OF TRADE UNIONS

What, then, is to be the future of the Trade Unions? At present they appear to have become to a large extent mere jumping-off grounds for so-called Labour politicians, and to that extent less useful to the workers; but there is no obvious reason why, with the spread of understanding among the members, they should not be valuable centres of

resistance to capitalist attack...the Trade Unions arose from the pressure upon the workers of their immediate needs in the early days of Capitalism. They necessarily took the form most convenient at the moment, and have adapted themselves to change circumstances more or less blindly. They have, therefore, invariably over-emphasised the occupational and other distinctions between the workers. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, organised as it is for the emancipation of the workers as a class, insists on the necessity for subordinating all such distinctions to class solidarity. On the political field the workers have but one interest, and that involves winning political power, and dispossessing the master class. The supreme conflict with the classes leaves no room for sectional antagonisms between the workers.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, while recommending Trade Unionists to offer their utmost resistance to the worsening of their conditions, never fails to point out that under Capitalism the pressure upon the workers is inevitable. It is insufficient, therefore, merely to apply the brake to these worsening conditions. The system that gives rise to them must be abolished. QUESTIONS OF THE DAY p25 The Socialist Party of Great Britain 1942

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## The Materialist Conception of History Part 2

### Economic Determinism

Another question which concerns the Materialist Conception of History is whether or not it is simply economic determinism. The Materialist Conception of History has been treated by some people, who have failed to understand it, as a fatalistic doctrine which makes people puppets in the hands of economic forces. This was never Marx's view. There is the famous statement he made, and repeated in various ways, that man makes his own history. Man is not somebody who has everything predetermined for him. This is not Marxism.

In his book "THE BASIC WRITINGS ON POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF MARX AND ENGELS" by Lewis S Feuer, published by Fontana books, he refers to the Materialist Conception of History as technological determinism and also as the economic determination of ideas. In spite of him being sympathetic to the Materialist Conception of History, Lewis Feuer has himself become confused. In some places he refers to the materialist Conception of History quite correctly and some of his descriptions are quite good, but at the same time he can hold that the Materialist Conception of History is a purely deterministic theory, which it is not.

In a letter written by Engels to Joseph Bloch on 21st September 1890 it reads as follows:

*"We make our history ourselves, but in the first place under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among these, the economic ones are ultimately decisive, but the political ones etc., and even the traditions that haunt men's minds also play a part, though not the decisive one –And again, in the second place, however, history is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflict between many individual wills of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life".*

Here Engels, far from being a determinist, is recognising that you have a conflict of wills of individuals.

Engels also explained that he and Marx were partly to blame for the over emphasis of the economic factor. He wrote this: *"Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle vis-a-vis our adversaries who denied it, and we had not always the time or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction"*. Some opponents of the Materialist Conception of History have interpreted it as assuming that each individual acts out his personal material interest, and making this assumption, they have had no difficulty in showing that this was not a tenable position.

Some years ago, an article in the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN set out to dispel the misconception that the Materialist Conception of History means that every individual acts out of material monetary motives. He had no

difficulty in this, but what he was attacking was not the Materialist Conception of History. The Materialist Conception of History explains how basic ideas develop, and that once the ideas have been developed, the individual who has accepted them can take on family, group or class ideas which may lead them to act against their own material interest.

One example of this is that during the Spanish Civil War a call went out for an International Brigade, and workers from all over the world set out for Spain. To suggest that they were doing this out of monetary interest is, of course, absurd. But it presents no problem for the Materialist Conception of History. They had developed an idea, muddled as it may have been, of working class solidarity against oppression - i.e. against Franco.

Marx and Engels carried this a stage further. In the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO they pointed out that in every revolutionary period, some sections of the old ruling class come over to the side of the revolution. They say, too, that individuals in the capitalist class who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole, can go over to the Socialist movement. These people can hardly be said to have been acting out of their own personal individual interest. Again, this presents no problem for the Materialist Conception of History. Some people in the French revolution, of the French nobility, quite early on turned themselves over to the side of the Revolution. This whole question of the error of taking the Materialist Conception of History to mean that individuals only act out of material self interest is discussed in Boudin's "THEORETICAL SYSTEM OF KARL MARX", in the two Appendices to that book. There was also similar discussion in Kautsky's "ETHICS AND THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY". Boudin's material includes a lot of quotations from Kautsky and it is not necessary to read Kautsky in addition to Boudin.

One sideline is the place of science in historical developments. Starkenburg raised the question with Engels about the development of science, and Engels replied in a letter dated 25th January 1894. Starkenburg argued that technique largely depends on the state of science. Engels replied that science itself largely depends on economic technique and the needs of society. To quote Engels:

*If, as you say, technique largely depends on the state of science, science depends far more still on the state and requirements of technique. If society has a technical need, that helps science forward far more than ten universities*". Engels gives a number of examples of how this has operated in history with regards to the development of scientific ideas. He also said to Starkenburg:

"Unfortunately it has become the custom in Germany to write the history of the sciences as if they had fallen from the skies".

## Ideas and the Materialist Conception of History

Another important question concerns the influence of ideas on history. The materialist Conception of History does not deny the influence of ideas. It sets out to explain where ideas come from, as against the idealists who say that ideas have an independent existence, and are the primary cause of social change. Marx and Engels left no doubt about their view on the influence of ideas. There is, for example, the passage from the opening chapter of Marx's "EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS NAPOLEON", where Marx says: "*the tradition of all past generations weighs like an incubus upon the brain of the living*", meaning, of course, that the ideas of the last social system persist into the new social system and still influences the minds of later generations.

Marx gave examples of the way in which old ideas carry on in the minds of new generations, and he dealt particularly with the way revolutionaries themselves do it. When a revolutionary comes forward, aiming to revolutionise society, the first thing he has to do is win the support of the masses of the population, peasants, workers or others. Revolutionaries whether they think this out clearly or not, invariably, as Marx says, hark back to a previous revolutionary situation. Marx's words were "*revolutionaries conjure into their service the spirits of the past, assume their names, their battle cries, their costumes, to enact a new historic scene in such time honoured disguise*". Marx mentions Luther, who presented himself as the Apostle Paul. Marx gave the example of the French Revolutionaries who invoked the Roman Republic, and who later on saw themselves in the image of the Roman Empire. The revolutionaries of 1848 harked back to 1789. Cromwell drew "*his language, passions and illusions from the Old testament*", because he was talking to people for whom the Old Testament was practically the only literature they knew, and which they understood very well.

The point of these examples is that ideas, once they have been developed, attain a semi-independent existence of their own, and persist in their influence for quite a long time.

In connection with this, Engels repeated in a letter to Conrad Schmidt (5th August 1890) a statement Marx was once alleged to have made. He wrote:

*"All I know is that I am not a Marxist"*. This arose out of a controversy which involved this question of the influence of ideas. Engels criticised a German writer, who, said Engels: *"has not discovered yet that though the material form of existence is the primary agent, this does not exclude spheres of ideas from reacting upon it in their turn, though with secondary effect"*. Engels wrote that it showed that this particular writer, though he said that he was a Marxist, did not understand the materialist Conception of History, and he called him a *"fatal friend of Marxism"* and added *"The Materialist Conception of History also has a lot of friends nowadays, to whom it serves an excuse for not studying history"*.

## The Materialist Conception of History is not Rigid

This was another point that Marx made. The Materialist Conception of History is not just another formula which can be simply applied in all circumstances. Circumstances differ; and to interpret historical change it is necessary to look at the actual circumstances of the time, at the actual conditions, before it is possible to see how the materialist Conception of History can explain them. An example of this is the way in which Engels in *"SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC"*, looked at the development of capitalism in this country. Engels looked at what was going on and attempted to say where it would lead. He laid down a general proposition that the development of the great combines, trusts, and monopolies would force the state to take them over. Engels argued that no capitalist nation would put up with production being conducted with bare faced exploitation of the community, by a small band of dividend mongers, organised in Trusts. This looked a quite reasonable proposition, but it has not worked out in the way Engels thought.

Because of certain developments of English history, and because English political parties were different from the American, the reaction of American Capitalism has been different from British Capitalism. Engels wrote: *"this necessity for conversion into State property is felt first in the great institutions for intercourse and communications, the post office, the telegraphs, and the railways"*, and he also noted, in another field, that United Alkali had become a very powerful concern in the chemical industry, and was ripe to be taken over by government.

In fact, this has not happened uniformly. In this and other countries it happened more or less as Engels foresaw it, except that United Alkali, which is now vastly larger and more powerful as Imperial Chemical Industries, has not yet been taken over, even a century later. But in America, the Bell Telephone System which, by far, is the biggest telephone system in the world is still a private company, operating under Government regulation. What happened is that whilst in this and some other countries the capitalists have dealt with too powerful monopolies by nationalising them, the Americans have gone on a rather different line. They have chosen to leave a lot of monopolies in private hands, but to have them operate under Federal Government regulations.

Even in this country, Gladstone as a Conservative, got through an Act permitting the Government to nationalise the railways in 1844, but it took just over a century before the Act, or a similar Act, was put into operation. Gladstone's Act was a permissive act. The capitalists were saying that the railways were too strong, and were therefore giving themselves power to take them over, if this became necessary. In fact this never happened until the Labour Government nationalised them in 1946.

Another interesting difference is that in America the capitalists control trusts by anti-trust laws, and under American law a monopoly is, by definition, illegal.

These comparisons show the importance of what Marx said. The materialist Conception of History cannot be applied as a simple formula. It is important to look at all the factors involved in each historical situation.

Another development which Engels could not have foreseen is the growth of the multinational companies, which

will present the capitalist class with further problems of control.

It is interesting to look at further examples of the persistence of ideas. We have already referred to the capitalist's need to get rid of the Corn Laws and go over to Free Trade. There is an interesting sidelight on the independent development of ideas in the Anti-Corn Law Movement. Capitalists put forward an idea which they thought was in their interests. They said they wanted Free Trade. They then began to surround this idea with all the trappings of freedom, democracy and patriotism. Dr Browning, a Free trade advocate once made the statement that "*Free trade is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is Free trade*". By the time the campaign was under way, the arguments seemed a long way away from the economic basis, which was that they wanted free trade for cheap food so they could pay lower wages. As Marx always emphasised, you cannot judge a movement by its slogans and banners. In the course of economic development, ideas are brought forward and when they have developed, people can hold them quite passionately apart from their economic basis.

## Great Men and the Materialist Conception of History

Another important question is how the Materialist Conception of Great Britain relates to "*great men*". Different views are held about the historical role of great men, ranging from the belief that history is made by great men, right to the other extreme, that great men have no existence at all, that they are pure figureheads, and that they are largely fictitious personalities created like the great film stars, by the publicity departments of Hollywood. One view says that great men make history; the other view says that they only personify movements and events, which develop quite independently of them. We would say that the valid explanation is that "*great men*" do not fit into either of these categories.

We refer again to what Engels said about Marx at Marx's funeral. We cannot take literally and without qualification the view that Marx discovered the Materialist Conception of History. He owed it partly of course to what other people had been doing, the forerunners of it, and to his active contacts with people engaged in the working class movement. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that some individual may play an exceptional role in influencing certain historical developments, even if this only means that the individual understands the direction in which the events are moving in advance of other people. Even if we said that Marx only saw what was arising out of Feudalism before other people saw it, he nevertheless played an exceptional role in bringing this to people's notice. Marx's education and his interest in the question, and his ability to carry it further what had more or less been seen by his predecessors; and his contacts with workers, enabled Marx to play this kind of part in historical development.

Napoleon is quoted as having said: "*Mohammed's case was like mine. I found all the elements at hand to found an Empire. Europe was weary of anarchy; they wanted to make an end of it. If I had not come, probably someone else would have done like me. I repeat, man is only a man, his power is nothing if circumstances and public sentiment do not favour him*". We do not know the date of this quotation, but we suspect that Napoleon did not write this when he was in the prime of his career; he probably said this later on in life, when he was reminiscing about the past. Nevertheless, it is a true statement about the role and position of great men.

Engels also mentioned Napoleon in his letter to Starkenburg of 25th February 1894. What Engels said was this:

*"That Napoleon, just that particular Corsican should have been the military dictator whom the French republic, exhausted by its own war, had rendered necessary, was an accident: but if Napoleon had been lacking, another would have filled his place!"*

The same could have been said of Abraham Lincoln. America, as it emerged from the Civil War, would not have been essentially different had Abraham Lincoln never existed. At some stage slavery would have been ended in America and modern industrial capitalism would have taken over. The abolition of slavery might have taken longer, but the victory of northern industrial capitalism would have happened some time. What we can concede, however, is that Lincoln's assassination at that particular point made possible a policy of the Federal Government towards the defeated Southern States which, had Lincoln lived, would probably not have happened.

There is also the example of Lenin. It can be said that Lenin and his Party, by seizing the opportunity offered by the

breakdown of Czarism, the defeat of the Russian army and the chaos in Russia, was able to influence the course of Russian history. Lenin was able to defeat Kerensky and was also able to get Russia to adopt a political structure that they might otherwise not have adopted - a dictatorship. Now, if we ask the larger question, was Lenin able, as he believed, to change the course of development by jumping from semi-feudalism to Socialism in Russia, then the answer is an emphatic NO. The situation of Russia in 1917 provided Lenin and his Party with certain possibilities, but it also included certain limitations, beyond which Lenin could not advance. The example of Russia is a vindication of the Materialist Conception of History, not a vindication of the idea that great men make history.

## THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view, the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insights into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange.

Engels, SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC

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# The Difference Between A Recession & A Depression

According to the DICTIONARY OF ECONOMICS (Penguin 2003), a recession is defined as two successive declines in seasonally adjusted gross domestic product GDP (page 327). The dictionary also defines a “*depression*” as “*A down-turn in the business cycle in which there is a sustained high level of unemployment*”. Both definitions are unsatisfactory. The first definition is arbitrary while the second is vague.

Marx favoured the word “*stagnation*” to describe periods of high levels of bankruptcy and unemployment following an economic crisis. Stagnation can be considered as a time of little or no economic growth associated with high unemployment.

In one place Marx wrote

...capitalist production moves through certain periodical cycles. It moves through a state of quiescence, growing animation, prosperity, overtrade, crisis and stagnation (WAGES PRICE AND PROFIT in SW1, p. 440).

In CAPITAL VOLUME III, Marx again uses the word “*stagnation*” when he writes of “*the turnover cycles*” as consisting of “...inactivity, growing animation, prosperity, overproduction, crash, stagnation, inactivity...” (Ch. 22, p 482 Penguin edition).

Engels also used the word “*stagnation*” and “*depression*” in his introduction to the English translation of Marx’s CAPITAL. However, he erroneously believed, for a time, that the “*GREAT DEPRESSION*” in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a “*slough of despond of a permanent and chronic depression*” (p. 113 Penguin ed.). In contrast Marx had stated that there were no permanent crises. He summed it up with the words “*There are no permanent crises*” (THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE VOL II Part 2 p 269).

The Socialist Party of Great Britain used the expression “*trade depression*” in its 1932 pamphlet “WHY CAPITALISM WILL NOT COLLAPSE” (page 14 and republished in *Capitalism’s Future...Collapse? Reformed? Abolished?* nd).

When Alfred Kahn, former President Jimmy Carter's chief economic advisor, used the politically taboo word “*depression*” in a statement from the White House in the 1970’s, the economist was attacked by politicians and others for using this politically charged word which conjured up images of the 1930’s. According to the journalist, William Saffire: “*as a result, the hapless but happy man pledged to substitute the word "banana" for "depression"*” in

*any future economic message*" (NEW YORK TIMES 09.02.09). This brings into play the political use of words by politicians to lessen the pain of having to explain why the economy is in crisis and depression.

Recently the INDEPENDENT (11.02.09) noted that up until the 1930's "*crises*" were referred to as "*panics*". Herbert Hoover, for political reasons changed the word from "*panics*" to "*depression*", thinking that it would be more palatable with the electorate. Harry Truman didn't want to go back to depressions so he started to use the term "*recession*". Gordon Brown now prefers the anaemic word "*down-turn*" to describe the current crisis and almost choked himself recently when he uttered the word "*depression*" at Prime Minister's Question Time.

While some may think it pedantic to quibble about words the political object of the re-definition or substitution of uncomfortable words with less threatening ones is to move away from Marx. This was begun in the 1920's when economists were forced to produce a Business Cycle theory in an attempt to soften the blow of Marx's critique of capitalism which showed crises as a result of the anarchy of commodity production and exchange for profit. An attempt was made to draw attention away from the failure of capitalist production to either financial and credit problems on the one hand or the policy failure of bankers and politicians on the other.

And as an example of this anti-Marxist politics attention is drawn to an essay *The New Depression* written by the former editor of MARXISM TODAY (one-time theoretical journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain), Martin Jacques. He conveniently splits the current economic turmoil into a "*recession*" and "*depression*" saying that Keynes should be restored to his rightful position to deal with the "*recession*" but; "*if the recession turns into a depression, Marx will once again become required reading*" (NEW STATESMAN 16th February 2008).

As far as Socialists are concerned Marx should be required reading for the working classes no matter what the state of the economy. Jacques is also completely silent on the failure of Keynesianism in the 1970's to deal with "*stagflation*" simultaneous inflation and unemployment as well as the anti- working-class politics he and the Communist Party of Great Britain pursued up to 1991 while supporting Russian capitalism.

If a political lesson is to be learnt it is this; if Marx described accurately the anarchic and social destructiveness of capitalism in the 19th century which has continued to this day through war, poverty and unemployment, why has not the working class done something about it by now? Capitalism can never be made to run in the interest of the working class majority no matter how economists and politicians describe the system of exploitation and the words they use to describe its effects of economic hardship and pain.

Writing in 1932 the SPGB said:

*"So long as the workers are prepared to resign themselves to the evils of Capitalism, and so long as they are prepared to place in control of Parliament parties that will use their power for the purpose of maintaining Capitalism, there is no escape from the effects of Capitalism. The workers will continue to suffer from the normal hardships of the capitalist system when trade is relatively good, and from the aggravated hardships which are the workers' lot during trade depressions"* (CAPITALISM WILL NOT COLLAPSE. p16).

That was seventy-eight years ago!!!! Surely it should be plainly obvious to anyone by now that the profit system needs to be replaced with Socialism.

## CLASS WAR

The newspapers have been chiding the Prime minister and the Labour government for descending into a divisive "*class war*" politics. Even Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell, speaking to the SUNDAY TELEGRAPH (27.12.09) has warned the government not to become obsessed about the Etonian background of the opposition. Class, class interest and class struggle are words which politicians, the media and academics have tried to suppress. It was hoped that they would have gone away and there would be social harmony and an adoration of the rich as role models to which the rest of the population should aspire.

Class, class interest and class struggle are of course divisive terms. Their continued existence show that capitalism, a society based on the private ownership of the means of production and class exploitation, is not cohesive and "*at*

*ease with itself* - far from it. The class struggle has never gone away. And from the perspective of both the working class and the capitalist class along with its politicians and paid agents in the media the class struggle is alive and well. Workers, no matter which Government is in power, have had to resist the encroachment of capital on their pay and working conditions. Workers have had to strike and take other forms of action.

The employers have constantly tried to increase the extent and intensity of exploitation. The Labour government has sought at every twist and turn to exhort workers to increase productivity, not to take higher wages and followed the free market doctrine of a “*flexible labour market*”. When necessary the Labour government has used the troops to break strikes as they did with the firefighter’s strike. The Labour government has always pursued a divisive class war politics against the working class. The Labour government, as do the Tories and Social Democrats, has to pursue the interests of the capitalist class against the working class. That is their job.

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## Has Capitalism Changed?

The BBC’s economics editor, Stephanie Flanders, recently asked the question; “*Do we need a new name for the kind of economy we live in today?*” She was worried that the current economic crises had changed the type of social system we live under and she thought that it was “*becoming a bit of an issue*” (BBC NEWS 13. 11.09).

However, it is only “*becoming a bit of issue*” with the politically naive. We had capitalism before the recent economic crisis and we have capitalism now as we pass through a depression to an up-turn in the economy. Nothing has changed. The capitalist class still own the means of production. The working class still have to sell their ability to work for a wage and a salary and they are still exploited by producing more social wealth than they receive in their pay packet.

Ms Flanders also noted in her article that world leaders had just been celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall which, to her frame of mind, signified the “*fall of communism*”.

Many political ideas fell with the collapse of the Berlin Wall but “*Communism*” was not one of them. What collapsed in 1989 was a ruthless State capitalism justified by a set of ideas and beliefs which had nothing to do with Marx and Socialism/Communism.

In fact the words *Socialism* and *Communism* mean exactly the same thing; a social system based on common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society where free and voluntary labour produces goods and services directly to meet human need. In Socialism there will be no wages system as there was in the Russia when it was ruled over by the dictatorship of the misnamed Communist Party.

It was Leninism that was buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall; a failed doctrine which had as its core the anti-Marxian elitism that workers were too stupid to understand socialism/communism and that it had to be imposed on the working class by the actions of a revolutionary professional elite. This vanguard politics, first advocated by Lenin and still preached by dozens of reactionary Trotskyist organisations the world over, is well and truly buried. It is no more. It has ceased to be. From an “*ist*”, to an “*ism*” to a “*wasm*” in 76 years, Leninism is now a dead ideology.

If Marx were alive in 1903 when Lenin published WHAT IS TO BE DONE? he would have repudiated the elitism of the text which replaced the working class as agents of revolutionary change with leaders like Lenin. Marx had stated time and time again that socialism/communism had to be the conscious and political action of the working class majority in the interest of the working class majority. Workers cannot be led to Socialism no matter whether the leaders are well meaning or not. Here are a few quotations from the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO to illustrate what Marx meant by workers thinking and acting in their own interests:

“*Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class*” (ESSENTIAL THINKERS 2002 p. 35).

And

*“All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority”* (loc cit p. 35).

Even when Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power through a coup d'état in 1917 they were unable to establish socialism/communism because the social conditions for a wage-less, moneyless and classless society did not exist. In fact they had to develop the Russian economy on capitalist lines through the imposition of a nationalisation programme where the State owned the means of production. They still had to trade and compete on the world market. This fact was noted at the time by THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN. A fact derived from an application of Marx's materialist conception of history.

And in the process of establishing a capitalist economy the Bolsheviks had no choice but to use the various State companies to exploit the working class, and for workers to produce what Marx called “*surplus value*” so that the profits (and yes, profits were made in the pre 1989 Russian Empire) could be re-invested to make more profits.

And through State capitalism the working class were exploited just as ruthlessly as workers elsewhere in the world. You cannot have socialism/communism existing simultaneously with the existence of wage labour. Common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution and the wages system are mutually exclusive. Wage labour presupposes capital and capital pre-supposes wage labour, a point made by Marx as early as 1847 in a series of talks Marx gave to the German Workers' Society in Brussels and collected together in a pamphlet *WAGE LABOUR AND CAPITAL*. Socialism/Communism has never existed to have been in the position to “*fall*”. It is just wishful thinking.

### **The urgency to establish Socialism/communism still exists. There is still a world to win.**

Ms Flanders also muses about capitalism itself. She writes “*...less than a year ago capitalism itself had seemed to be on its knees*”. No, capitalism was in crisis not on its knees but there is nothing unusual about this. Marx stated in *CAPITAL* that capitalism is inherently unstable and contradictory and periodically passes through a destructive trade cycle which sees high levels of bankruptcy and unemployment. Capitalism was never going to collapse; another feature of the profit system Marx drew attention to in the second volume of *THE THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE* where he wrote: “*There is no such thing as a permanent crisis*”. All that has happened over the past few years is that capitalism has passed from an economic crisis to a trade depression. In time it will recover, pass into a boom and then experience a crisis again.

Ms Flanders is bemused about recent events where the State was forced to intervene in the financial and banking markets. She does not believe that it is the capitalism we thought we had. Her poorly considered definition of capitalism is minimal government involvement in the economy, particularly in banking and finance. She has been reading too much F. A. Hayek and Milton Friedman. Economic Liberalism is a utopian capitalism; an imaginary fantasy world of a stateless market economy with commodity production and exchange working in perfect harmony. The real world is just not like that. Capitalism is anarchic, exploitative, unpredictable and destructive.

There has been no change in capitalism. The new name is the same as the old name; or as the Who sang on WE WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN: “*Meet the new boss the same as the old boss*”. Capitalism is defined as commodity production and exchange for profit where the labour power of workers' is bought and sold by capitalists for a wage or salary. In capitalism production only takes place if a profit is to be had. No profit means that there is no production. At the heart of capitalism is the production and appropriation of surplus value from the working class into the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.

The State is always involved in the economy because it protects the private ownership of the means of production forcing workers onto the labour market to sell their ability to work and in the process of production produce more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. Just as you cannot have a tortoise without its shell you cannot have capitalism without its State.

Ms Flanders bandies about the phrase “*free market*”. Markets are never free. The labour market imprisons billions of workers within the exploitative wages system. Everything sold in the market comes with a price. What this crisis has demonstrated is the uselessness of economists and their theories both in the City and in the universities. They do not comprehend capitalism and they never will.

Even if they did read *CAPITAL* and understood what Marx had to say about capitalism, its exploitation and violent contradictions they could not stop offering superficial and apologetic accounts of the profit system to their employers without losing their jobs. The truth is that capitalism can never be made to run in the interest of all society. As a transient social system capitalism is not eternal; it has a history; a beginning and an end in class struggle.

**Capitalism only ends with the establishment of socialism/communism. And that depends on the working class taking conscious and political action.**

## A SOCIALIST VIEW OF BOLSHEVIST POLICY

### Where We Stand.

Ever since the Bolshevik minority seized the control of affairs in Russia we have been told that their “success” has completely changed Socialist policy. These “*Communists*” declare that the policy of Marx and Engels is out of date. Lenin and Trotsky are worshipped as the pathfinders of a shorter and easier road to Communism.

Unfortunately for these “*Bolsheviks*”, no evidence has yet been supplied to show wherein the policy of Marx and Engels is no longer useful, and until that evidence comes the Socialist party of Great Britain will continue to advocate the same Marxian policy as before. We will continue to expose and oppose the present system and all its defenders and apologists. We shall insist upon the necessity of the working class understanding Socialism and organizing within a political party to obtain it.

**Socialism Far Off in Russia.** When we are told that Socialism has been obtained in Russia without the long, hard and tedious work of educating the mass of workers in Socialism we not only deny it but refer our critics to Lenin’s own confessions. His statements prove that even though a vigorous and small minority may be able to seize power for a time, they can only hold it by modifying their plans to suit the ignorant majority. The minority in power in an economically backward country are forced to adapt their program to the capitalist world around them. Offers to pay war debts to the allies, to establish a Constituent assembly, to compensate capitalists for losses, to cease propaganda in other countries, and to grant exploitation rights throughout Russia to the Western capitalists all show how far along the capitalist road they have had to travel and how badly they need the economic help of other countries. It shows above all that their loud and defiant challenge to the capitalist world has been silenced by their own internal and external weaknesses as we have so often predicted in these pages (SOCIALIST STANDARD, July 1920, reprinted in RUSSIA SINCE 1917 June 1948 pp18-19 The Socialist Party of Great Britain).

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## The Failure of Economic Models

In a recent appearance on US television, Vice President Joe Biden insisted that President Obama’s \$787 billion stimulus package had already “*saved or created*” 150,000 jobs.

The show’s host, David Gregory pointed out that, at 9.4%, the unemployment rate had in fact risen well above the 8% maximum predicted by Obama in January 2009 (THE DAILY SHOW 17/06/09 msnbc.com). A year later in January 2010 the unemployment rate rose again to 10% (It is now 9.7%).

The vice President’s response was that: “*We took the mainstream model*” as advocated by the Council of Economic Advisors which brief the White House. In short Obama’s team had placed their faith in what are known as “*economic models*”.

Economic models have only been successful in predicting one thing: their own failure to predict. Take a look at the recent failure rate of economic models. Not one economic model predicted and explained the economic cycle leading to the current crisis and depression. It was this failure to predict the trade cycle that led politicians like Gordon Brown to boast that there would be no more “*boom and bust*”.

Even the former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan has now lost faith in economic models:

*The essential problem is that our models – both risk models and econometric models – as complex as they have become, are still too simple to capture the full array of governing variables that drive global economic reality. . . models, as we currently employ them, are structurally deficient* (FINANCIAL TIMES 16.03.08)

The prediction that comes out of any economic model is, to a very large extent, driven by the assumptions that underlie it. Economic models tend to assume things like; efficient markets, rational expectations, perfect information, and so on. In short, it is not the mathematics that is the problem but the economics.

President Obama believed his advisors when they told him that the fiscal stimulus would keep the unemployment rate from rising above 8%, but their forecasts were wrong. They were wrong because their underlying assumptions turned out to be too simplistic. The same applied to the optimistic boasts by Gordon Brown that the trade cycle no longer existed. The Treasury’s model is characterised as being “*Keynesian in the short run but with a neo-classical long run equilibrium*” ([www.bized.cu.uk](http://www.bized.cu.uk)). Two failed economic theories (The model is run on the computer main-frame at Warwick University).

Ironically Keynes said that “*in the long-run we are all dead*”; a comment that describes the utter failure of capitalist economics to solve real social problems as they face workers. Take the case of unemployment. Neither Keynes nor the Monetarists have any cure for unemployment and trade depressions. What about Marx?

Would Marxism succeed to solve the problems caused by capitalism where the others have failed? The answer is no. Marx’s approach was different. He showed that there is no policy whatever which will prevent capitalism from producing periodic economic depressions and high levels of unemployment.

This is what Marx said:

“*The life of modern industry becomes a series of periods of moderate activity, prosperity, overproduction, crisis and stagnation*” (CAPITAL, VOL. 1 p495 Kerr edition)

It is important to keep clearly in mind that the “*crisis*” is quite distinct from the “*stagnation*”, or trade depression, which comes after the crisis.

Keynes and the Keynesians said Marx had got it all wrong and that Marx theories were helplessly unscientific and they promised us that there would never be another depression if Keynes’s policy was adopted.

So let us look at the facts. Before Keynes came along there were economic crises and depression starting in 1875, 1921 and 1930. And after Keynes death there were crises and depressions in the 1970’s, 1980’s, 1990’s and now, 2009 with unemployment currently at 2.48 million. Capitalism just went its own way whether Keynes was around or not.

These trade depressions all displayed characteristics highlighted by Marx. What happens in each phase of the trade cycle is this:

- “*moderate activity*”: In this phase, capitalism is recovering from an economic depression. Production is increasing and capitalists are competing with each other for a share of the market. The market goes to the cheapest producers. Attempts are made to cheapen production through the introduction of labour-saving machinery which continually renders workers redundant and making them jobless.

• “prosperity or boom”: In the period of boom, production is at its peak and the market seems to be limitless. Profits rise. Capitalists compete with each other to buy materials, machinery and scarce workers. Unemployment largely disappears.

• “overproduction”: Then comes “overproduction”: This was described by Marx as “*disproportions between different branches of industry*”. It means that some industries, say steel or ship building or car manufacture or petrol have produced too much for their respective markets. It is not a general overproduction of all industries which is infantile and meaningless.

• “crisis”: Overproduction causes crisis. It is caused by those capitalists committed to buy raw materials and take on workers for which there are no markets for their commodities. It is not caused by an inadequacy of workers’ wages. The wages of the whole working class rise before a crisis enabling them to buy more consumer goods.

• “depression”: Then comes the depression. It is caused by workers becoming unemployed and reducing their demand for consumer goods. Profits also fall and the wages of the working class also fall.

Then the cycle happens all over again.

These factors are not taken into consideration by the Treasury model. But even if they were it would make no difference to the general and particular limitations of economic models in understanding capitalism.

Marx did not create a model of capitalism. His interest lay in the process of capitalist accumulation and the economic law of motion of modern society. Marx’s method was “*the power of abstraction*” not the use of microscopes and chemical experiments. He began with the world of commodities and its elementary form: the individual commodity. He showed that there is a contradiction right at the heart of capitalism between the use-value and exchange value (or value) of a commodity, concrete and abstract labour, purchase and sale, and the commodity and money.

Marx was able to show the inner connections of economic categories like commodities, money and capital. From this he was able to demonstrate that the trade cycle is part and parcel of the drive of capitalists to accumulate capital and would lead to periodic economic crisis, trade depressions, bankruptcy, high levels of unemployment, social pain for the working class who were made redundant. The only solution for the working class was to take conscious and political action, abolish the wages system and establish Socialism.

## THE NEED FOR ECONOMICS

*The SPGB is the only party which uses Marxian economics in its propaganda for the obvious reason that we alone are concerned with exposing the capitalist system and showing how profit comes from the sale of labour power through the wages system (SOCIALIST STUDIES No. 2 p 1.).*

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# Capitalism: A Love Story

CAPITALISM: A LOVE STORY (2009) by Michael Moore is one of those films you expect to be an analysis of capitalism and the process of exploitation but one that is ultimately shallow and disappointing. The easy target is the US working classes’ “*love affair*” with capitalism and how the “*American Dream*” has ended in a nightmare. Capitalism can never be run in the interest of the working class majority and this has been argued and demonstrated by Socialists over the past century and more. The American Dream was always a useful myth for the politically stupid.

The film begins with several U.S. propaganda films praising “*free enterprise*” and the “*profit motive*.” but the film does not explain where profit comes from. The film is not a penetrating Marxian critique of the profit system but a shallow reformist critique of capitalist propaganda. The conclusion of the film’s producer is not to replace capitalism

with Socialism but to reform it to something capitalism can never become; run in the interest of all of society. Another problem with the film is that capitalism is identified with Wall Street and financial giants such as Bank of America, Lehman Brothers, and Merrill Lynch. Yes they might be filled with greed, corruption, and deceit but even if these characteristics were removed they would still be necessary institutions within commodity production and exchange for profit. And capitalism would still go into crisis and economic depression even if the financiers and speculators behaved like ascetic monks.

The next part of the film criticises the Federal government's \$700 billion bail out of the banking system. Moore believes that there is something wrong with this policy. He believes the US government somehow should reflect the interest of all society. The US government exists to serve the interest of the capitalist class not society as a whole. Governments can never serve "*the people*". They are what Marx called in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO "*The Executive of the bourgeoisie*".

The film offers no Socialist solution but instead homes in on personal accounts of individual resistance to the evictions from homes and the futile union workers' occupation of Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago seen by Moore as significant because it is the first factory occupation in the U.S. in decades. However, it leaves the capitalist class secure. Moore appears to be advocating general strikes, resistance to bailiffs and protest marches outside Wall Street financial institutions. This is a futile gesture politics that does not abolish the capitalist cause of the problems facing the working class. Moore does not say that the real cause of the problems of unemployment, homelessness and the privilege and power of the capitalist class derives from the private ownership of the means of production and its protection by the State. He can't. Moore no more understands capitalism than the financiers and politicians he criticises.

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## A Decade of Austerity & Social Pain

As we leave behind a decade of terrorist attacks, numerous wars including Iraq and Afghanistan, torture, a world economic crisis, endemic poverty and corrupt politicians we are now told by politicians and media pundits that we now face a decade of austerity and social pain.

The last ten years, though, was no bed of roses. The working class were still exploited by the capitalist class. Workers could still see no further than their pay packets unable to use their imagination for a revolutionary socialist change. They were prepared to be humiliated at work to become mere appendages to computers and machines. Never had the abolition of the wages system been more urgent.

Workers also clung to the ignorance of religion and nationalism. Mass religion may no longer be the irrational incantations of priests and imams. Instead the cult of celebrity and professional sport has become the new opiates to dull the worker's mind into an obedient conformity to the crass consumerism and superficial pleasure of commodity production and exchange for profit.

But apocalyptic religious fundamentalism was everywhere during the last decade. Islamic fundamentalists strapped bombs to their bodies in a swift exit from the living to embrace a fictional world of 72 heavenly virgins and Allah. And Christian fundamentalists celebrated their dark conservatism and scientific ignorance by opening a creationist museum in Virginia where God is shown creating Adam and Eve on the same day as the dinosaurs some 6000 years ago.

And in the real world millions died in abject poverty while the rich enjoyed an imaginable lifestyle; the best that money could buy.

Elsewhere professional killers marched through towns and cities cheered on by equally stupid crowds waving flags and singing patriotic songs. There was no let up in capitalism's wars. At the Chilcott Inquiry in January 2010 an unapologetic Tony Blair penned in for British capitalism a future war against Iran.

Nationalism for the soldiers meant being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan for raw resources, trade routes and spheres of influence, a coffin draped in the Union Jack and a procession through tears and grief to become just one more soon to be forgotten media statistic. Capitalism and its wars have always given austerity and social pain to the working class.

There have been ten wasted years of a new century. The only real difference the working class can make to this new decade is to realise they do not have to continually endure austerity and social pain and instead organise consciously and politically for the establishment of Socialism.

## **Whose austerity and whose social pain?**

And let us ask a pertinent question of the politicians and media about the bleak prospects for the coming decade. Whose austerity and whose social pain? Well the forthcoming decade of austerity and social pain will exclude the capitalist class. They will still retain their lives of privilege and luxury.

Capitalists begin the new decade of the 21st century owning the means of production and living off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit. Their ability to exploit the working class is protected by the machinery of government through their politicians; Labour, Liberal democrats and Tory. The austerity will fall on the working class majority. They will lose their jobs, have their homes repossessed, have to take pay cuts and have to work for a pittance.

According to the Abbey, 500,000 people aged between 30 and 40 years of age are forced back to live with their parents (DAILY MAIL 31st December 2009). They are lucky to find a roof over their head. The homeless live in doss houses or in doorways. Never mind, they had Prince William for company over Christmas. Good Public relations for this social parasite. The next day he was back to the warmth of his father's homes at Clarence House and High Grove.

## **The discredited politicians**

And what of the discredited politicians with their lies, dissembling and empty promises? No more boom and bust they told us. They pointed to a capitalist utopia of free trade, free markets and an increasing wealthy lifestyle and well being for everyone. It was a myth. Capitalism only works for the rich minority.

Now it is austerity and social pain. In truth, the political leaders have no answers for the working class majority. This is the important lesson to learn for the new decade. If workers do not want to continue to live austere lives blighted by poverty, war and unemployment they will have to do something about it themselves. No one else is going to change the situation in which workers find themselves. Only workers can end the exploitative wages system through conscious political action.

Let this be a decade when workers finally realise that they have the ability to create a social system without austerity and social pain; a world in which there is no war, poverty, and unemployment; where there is no class division, class interest and class exploitation; a society in which production takes place purely to meet human need. Make this the decade of social revolution; of the revolutionary use of the vote and parliament; of the abolition of the profit system and its replacement with common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society.

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## **Marx & Keynes: What Is At Stake?**

During the current crisis and economic depression, with free market economics and its obsession with finance and banking capital in disarray, it was noticeable how quickly the ideas of Keynes were introduced by governments, their

economic advisers and the capitalist media as soon as the name “*Marx*” was mentioned again. They had assumed, wrongly, that Marx and his revolutionary ideas had been buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall. He hadn’t. And nor his ideas. You cannot bury a scientific understanding of social reality.

Here is Marx on economic crisis:

“...capitalist production moves through certain periodical cycles. It moves through a state of quiescence, growing animation, prosperity, overtrade, crisis and stagnation (WAGES PRICE AND PROFIT in *Selected Works Vol. I* p. 440).

Such was the global nature of the crisis and the sheer incompetence of economists to predict that it would occur that Marx’s face featured on the front cover of TIMEMAGAZINE in Europe over the headline “*What Would Marx Think?*” (February 2009) although he was missing from the US edition so as not to frighten the readership there some of whom had come to think of George Bush as a “*Socialist*” and President Obama as a “*Communist*”.

Marx was being discussed seriously on the BBC with a renewed interest which, in turn, led to more of his books and writings being bought.. The French President was photographed reading CAPITAL (THE TIMES 20 10 2008). Even the Vatican, who had once put Marx’s writings on its proscribed list of books which the faithful could not read for fear of thinking for themselves, came out in favour of Marx with Georg Sans, a German-born professor of the history of contemporary philosophy at the pontifical Gregorian University, stating that Marx’s work “*remained especially relevant today*”. And the Cranfield University Institute of Management ran a YOU TUBE on-line lecture by a Professor Cliff Bowman on *Marx and the Crisis*. The Professor gets a C+ for effort but he showed scant understanding of Marx’s ideas and the cause of crises.

However, by May of last year the FINANCIAL TIMES had hit back with a anti-Marxian review article by Tony Barber on three recently published books on Marx, Engels and Communism respectively. Barber conceded that capitalism was in its worse shape since the 1930’s and that some of the criticisms Marx made against capitalism are as valid today as they were 150 years ago but it he rejected the claim that Marx was “*proved right after all*”. (May 16th 2009).

All eyes were then turned to Keynesian stimulus policies of the Obama regime in the US and the Brown administration in Britain. The importance of Keynes for academic economists and government policy advisers was the symbol of him as “*saviour of capitalism*” not what Marx would think about the current depression. Professor Robert Lucas, professor of Economics at Chicago University stated that Keynes is someone you need when you are in a “*fox-hole*”; the same professor who a few years earlier had claimed that the trade cycle was a thing of the past as we marched on to a free-market utopia of social harmony.

And true to form THE ECONOMIST opened up with an on-line debate between Professor Brad Delong and Professor Zingales with the proposition: “*This House believes that we are all Keynesians now*” (10. 03. 09). Marx was not going to get a look-in. And in September 2009 THE ECONOMIST invited Keynes’s biographer, Lord Skidelsky to tea to chat about his forthcoming book KEYNES: RETURN OF THE MASTER ECONOMIST (pod cast). The return from the dead of a failed economics.

This comes as no surprise for those acquainted with the history of capitalist economics. Karl Marx inadvertently forecast much of the antagonism which would arise on the publication of his theories as they appear in CAPITAL.

In the preface to Volume I he said:

“*In the domain of Political Economy, free scientific enquiry does not merely meet the same enemies as in all other domains. The peculiar nature of the material it deals with, summons into the fray on the opposing side the most violent, sordid and malignant passions of the human breast, the Furies of private interest. The Established Church, for instance, will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than 1/39th of its income* (p. 92 Penguin ed.).

However, Marx could never have believed the scale of the ignorant opposition his theories aroused and the depths to which it has descended. Today, the gross misrepresentation of Marx’s theories continues unabated. This is in part

due to lack of knowledge of the theories themselves, but mainly to the threateningly revolutionary effect his scientific enquiry has on modern capitalism. *“Marx is dead: don’t resuscitate him”* screamed the GUARDIAN (27.9.08). Only economic theories which are supposedly useful to the running of capitalism and which do not attack the private ownership of the means of production will gain support from the media manipulating *“public opinion”* and of course from the tame economists and other advocates who are paid to defend capitalism.

Yet without an understanding of capitalism and its contradictions provided by Marx writings we seem to be stuck in a trade cycle Groundhog Day. And with each recurring economic crisis out goes one set of economic policies to be replaced with a new set of policies which have already failed on previous occasions. With the demise of economic liberalism, and the revival of Keynesianism, history has merely repeated itself first as tragedy and second time as farce.

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## Obituary: Harry Baldwin

It is with great regret that we announce the death of Harry Baldwin who has died suddenly on January 24th at the age of 79. Harry was a committed Socialist throughout most of his adult life and was a member of the old Socialist Party of Great Britain joining in 1950. He was also a conscientious objector to National service. His socialist activity was immense: back in the 1950s, he was both a speaker and a member of the Executive Committee (in those days that meant a lot). He was also on at least one sub-committee and was active in his Branch. At the weekends he was a regular speaker on Saturdays and Sundays at meetings, both in South London and at other venues, also taking his turn on the Hyde Park platform. Later he wrote articles for the SOCIALIST STANDARD

Harry was a sound Socialist, a man of principle: which was why - during the period when the Party was becoming divided over the TUC Day of Action (in opposition to the Tory government's anti-trade union policies), and the EC was split on whether to support this futile 1-day protest, it triggered his resignation from the Party in 1978. As he wrote to one member at the time - *“a house divided is one which will fall”* which proved to be the case with the expulsion of sound Socialists from Camden and North West London Branches in May 1991.

Harry’s friend and comrade, Robert Baltrop, had noted in THE MONUMENT the division within the Party during the 1970s where: *“Executive members like Baldwin and D’Arcy”* who had opposed the revisionists *“were characterized as fundamentalists who held the Party back”* (p.182). Well the *“revisionists”* got control of the Party and had free reign to shape the Party in their own image but the promise of rapid growth without the *“fundamentalists”* was just wishful thinking.

Harry worked tirelessly as a Socialist within the SPGB’s Object and Declaration of Principles. With Harry you knew where he stood. When he learnt that we had been expelled for using the full name of the Party in political propaganda (as required under Clause 8 of the Declaration of Principles) he first subscribed to SOCIALIST STUDIES then started to come to our meetings, and finally joining us some ten years ago in the political struggle against capitalism.

His first contribution for the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain was to write the pamphlet CAPITALISM CAUSES WAR AND TERRORISM. He also went on to write the Party’s pamphlet; SOCIALISM VERSUS RELIGION, WAR AND CAPITALISM. He was instrumental in also getting the SPGB’s 1948 pamphlet THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS republished. The first edition of 200 copies quickly sold out and a second edition of 400 has just been reprinted.

Harry wrote numerous articles for SOCIALIST STUDIES, the last being *Poverty, War and Unemployment* for SOCIALIST STUDIES 74. He also gave lectures at our indoor meetings and Summer School, debated against defenders of capitalism and spoke regularly at Hyde Park.

Harry learnt how to put the Socialist case in public from studying Tony Turner. It was an abrasive style suited to

dealing with hecklers that plagued his meetings in Hyde Park although Harry was recently surprised when three notorious hecklers came up to him after a meeting to say they only heckled to get an audience for him.

Harry was forthright in his views - you always knew where he stood, no prevarications. As a speaker, if there was a newcomer at a meeting, he made time afterwards and was immensely persuasive and charming. We will badly miss his huge commitment and energy, his passionate hatred of war and reformism and humbug - especially religious humbug - and, of course, his ability as a speaker and writer.

We offer our condolences to his children and family.

## THINGS CAN ONLY GET WORSE UNDER LABOUR

In May 1997 when Tony Blair became Prime Minister he said: "*Mine is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war. That is a prize beyond value*". Thirteen years and three wars later Bob Ainsworth, Defence Secretary said "*Britain will be involved in faraway wars for decades*" (DAILY MAIL 09.02.10)

And lo and behold, a week later the Falkland Islands makes an ironic reappearance. Oil tests are about to start into the deep ocean floor in the East Falklands Basin. Argentina has created an embargo in the region by preventing ships passing through its waters to the islands. Brown has said that that Britain is prepared to defend the Islands which is what you would expect from a capitalist government. The Falklands War in 1982 meant the loss of 904 military lives; the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan numbers tens of thousands including civilians.

You cannot have capitalism without war. The only way that people will be able to live lives without war is to establish a world wide socialist system without national boundaries, without classes and without the capitalist cause of war-commodity production and exchange for profit. Labour's anthem in 1997 was "*Things can only get better*". It has been quite the reverse.

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## Obituary: Grace Woods

We have learnt that Grace Woods has died on the 27th January 2010. Comrade Woods was married to Doug Lock a party member; both of whom were members of Lewisham branch.

She was the branch treasurer for quite a number of years and also was involved on Tuesdays at Head Office along with Ann Fisher (MacDowell) in the distribution of the SOCIALIST STANDARD and other Party literature. She was born and lived in the Charlton area of London and had worked briefly, in the Woolwich Arsenal, before she gained a scholarship which enabled her to join the nursing profession, becoming a radiologist, and spent the remainder of her working life engaged in this work

Grace Woods came across the party at an outdoor propaganda meeting in her area and subsequently attended at an indoor meeting. Her mother's instructions were, "*If there are no ladies present come home immediately*", needless to say there were none present but Grace did not go home but instead stayed and listened to the speaker and shortly afterwards joined the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Grace resigned from the Clapham Party at the expulsion of Socialists from North West London and Camden Branches. She attended our lectures into her early 90's, subscribed to SOCIALIST STANDARD and supported us until her death. She will be missed by her comrades and friends and we send our condolences to her daughter Pam and her family.

## FROM THE WEB

We have a growing presence of the World Wide Web despite the attempt of the Clapham based Socialist Party to disrupt our activity. We do not know who reads our articles or who visits our web site. Nevertheless our ideas are spreading. People come into contact with us and take out subscriptions or purchase socialist literature. We are not alone. Occasionally we come across our ideas being used by other workers trying to put the Socialist case on blogs or in chat rooms. Very occasionally we get some recognition for the work we do in spreading Socialist ideas. We came across the following "*the reconstituted SPGB are the bearers of the flame, the standard, the real essence of the true socialist message*". The anonymous author of this sentiment also left our calling card should anyone want to visit our web site: [www.socialiststudies.org.uk](http://www.socialiststudies.org.uk)

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# Object and Declaration of Principles

## Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

## Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working

class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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